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ABSTRACT

Determining the characteristics of effective teaching has been a problem for more than 50 years. Studies attempting to rate characteristics or to devise a fair evaluation method abound, but one necessary perspective must not be overlooked: that of the student. An effective teacher transmits knowledge with a blend of intensity and empathy that enthuses the learner; these qualities can be measured and should be criteria of teaching effectiveness. Other tangible and intangible behavioral qualities can be measured in the areas of technical skills, cognitive and affective qualities, and teaching techniques. These qualities can be rated on a scale measuring the degree of transmission, so that an accurate assessment of the teacher's impact can be gained. The use of this method by faculty, administration, and students would be less threatening to teachers than the sole use of student test scores. It seems likely that teachers who scored well in this evaluation method would have enthusiastic students who would score well on tests. Student evaluations of teacher performance can be a potent and valuable tool in teaching teachers to be students again. (FG)

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MEASURING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

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For more than 50 years educational executives, and teachers them-
selves, have sought to solve the problem of costly, wasteful, ineffec-
tive teaching, and to answer the question: what constitutes effective
teaching?

What is the cost of this ineffectiveness? Nearly incalculable.
Are we any nearer to agreeing on an accurate device for measuring such

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effectiveness? Evidently not. But consider Peter Seldin's comment:

Beneath the surface reasons against faculty appraisal lies the unspoken professorial dislike of being judged. This is natural.

This natural resistance needs sympathetic understanding and a trade-off approach that emphasizes the positive values to the professor in improving his classroom teaching performance.¹

Is there such a device with which to measure teaching effectiveness? There are many of them. Miller reports, "Student initiated evaluation of classroom teaching has mushroomed . . . and some excellent and sensitive programs have been developed."²

It was the obvious need for a better method of gauging classroom teaching that led us to embark on field research in this area. But no matter how many useful and accurate insights appear in this article, there remains the problem of gaining acceptance of this instrument. Such acceptance may require the revolt of an entire 45,000-student California system in 1986. After that, despite further resistance from the AAUP and the AFT, administrators across the country will be forced to adopt the consumer approach and begin evaluating teachers on the basis of classroom performance rather than their degrees.

¹Peter Seldin, Successful Faculty Evaluation Programs (Crugers, N.Y.: Coventry Press, 1980), pp. 7-8.

²Richard I. Miller, Evaluating Faculty Performance (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1974), p. 27.

Just sit back for a moment, and think. Who were the top three teachers in your own experience? The top three who made you love to go to class, who you knew would give you a run for your money and make you learn how to learn no matter what the material was. Have you got the images of those teachers clearly in your mind? Good. Now make a list, in you mind or on a piece of paper, of what made those teachers the top three in your experience as a student. You can make a short list, but just make sure it has down the qualities that made that little group of teachers stand out in your memory as the best.

What you have just done is put yourself back on the student's side of the desk. You have taken a look at what a teacher really looks like up there, standing stiffly at the lectern, or by the blackboard, droning on as if there might be a prize in store for the teacher who puts the most students to sleep in a given hour. Perish the thought--that just might be you up there!

When you were on the student side of the world, did you ever imagine that you might become one of that vast grey tide of soporific instructors that rises and falls with each passing semester. In fairness to my own profession, I must stress that the majority of the instructors that exist probably fall in some middle category of teaching performance. However, as John Heisner might say in his article, "The Ugly Face of Mediocrity," the mediocre teacher might be the most dreary and ineffective of all. Let us take up his cry to defeat mediocrity, and

approach the topic of teacher effectiveness with open minds and minimal defensiveness.³

As Marques et al. note in their article about what qualities constitute effective teaching, there seems to be no,

accepted, reliable, and valid system of instructional evaluation. To achieve this ideal system, teaching effectiveness must first be defined in terms of conceptions held by students and faculty, representing a wide variety of academic areas. In short, consensus must be established regarding the nature of effective teaching before adequate evaluation procedures can be developed, validated, and implemented.⁴

In Marques et al.'s study, 100 hypothetical instructors were evaluated by each of 80 participants. The participants included an equal number of male undergraduate students and male teachers of undergraduate subjects. Before moving on to what the attributes were that constituted effective teaching, there are two aspects of this study that might make the conclusions difficult to accept. The first is that the instructors who are being evaluated are hypothetical. It is a lot easier to evaluate a concept of a professional, rather than the professional himself, particularly since hypothetical teachers are not colleagues to whom you may owe favors, or instructors, for whom you may feel anything from affection to deep hostility!

³John D. Heisner, "The Ugly Face of Mediocrity," Instructor, 89 (March 1980), p. 18.

⁴Todd Marques, D. M. Lane and P. W. Dorfman, "Toward the Development of a System for Instructional Evaluation: Is There Consensus Regarding What Constitutes Effective Teaching?" Journal of Educational Psychology, 71 (1979), p. 840.

The second problem with the methodology here is that only male participants were used. Attitudes toward female instructors might have been counteracted in the regression analysis if there were an equal number of male and female students and teachers participating in the study.

Given these drawbacks, the study does offer some useful food for thought. Marques et al. related teacher effectiveness to seven basic teacher attributes. These were: INFO, meaning the amount of information imparted in the course; LECT, the presentation style; AROU, arousal of student interest; DEMD, meaning the intellectual demand of the course, KNOW, which referred to the instructor's knowledge of the course material; RAPR, meaning the rapport established with the students; and PROC, which meant the clarity of course requirements and grading procedures.⁵

The participants represented all major fields of study, and the hypothetical teachers also represented all primary disciplines, including subjects from the hard sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences.⁶ The hypothetical teachers were rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the low-point and 10 being the high-point. In addition, it is relevant to note that raters could ascribe as much or as little weight of importance as they chose for each of the seven major characteristics. So the potential existed for one rater to grade a teacher a 9, after finding

⁵Marques et al., p. 840.

⁶Marques et al., p. 843.

that teacher strong in the categories he felt were important, while another rater might find an entirely different teacher also a 9, if that teacher was strong in the qualities that rater felt were important. This means that the result of any given rating was subject to each rater's view of which characteristics were important. Therefore, this study revealed more about raters than about rating systems or the necessary qualities for effective teaching.

Now, what if a group of raters, including both teachers and students, were given real, live instructors to evaluate, and were given the obligation to rate those instructors according to a scale where each characteristic was given equal weight to all the others? Maybe it hasn't been done before, but then, someone has to be first!

There does seem to be some consensus on the fact that effective teaching seems to incorporate knowing the material and presenting it with enough pizzazz to make even a 7 a.m. Victorian Lit class wake up and listen. Knowing the material does not stop at getting tenure. In fact, knowing means keeping up with the material from year to year, so knowing doesn't stop at all. And pizzazz means all the technical and affective qualities and approaches you use to get your knowledge to be their knowledge.

Now, there is no professional organization that would accept pizzazz as a measure of effectiveness, so the next logical step is to present

a list of characteristics and behaviors that are all equally important in making a teacher one of the top three that a student would happily recall forever.

TWO ESSENTIALS

Our basic theory for effective classroom transmission is that such an effective individual must have at least two basic qualities:

intensity and empathy.

Empathy, the important central ability to feel as the other person feels, must be possessed in large quantity. Having empathy does not necessarily mean being sympathetic. An instructor can sympathize with the student in the back row who obviously has experienced a wretched home life. But he needn't agree with that feeling. Empathy is stronger. It represents the valuable and irreplaceable ability to command attention and retention.

The second quality, intensity, is a peculiar kind of developable joy or drive which makes the instructor want to transmit through is own feeling. Strong feelings transmit. Strong feelings are transferable. The teacher's feeling is that he absolutely must transfer information. This feeling parallels those commanded and transmitted by actors. Undeniably, if two actors appear on a stage, the one who moves an arm or leg, as opposed to the other actor speaking, will command immediate

attention. Therefore, the motion on a stage, the illusion created if you will, becomes important. The feeling becomes important. The visual quality and resulting student images become important.

There are going to be twenty-two characteristics listed, each one equally significant in a teacher's overall effectiveness. If you question this at any given point, just think about the teachers you've had who didn't show one of these qualities, and you're likely to agree that every single one of these ingredients is just as important as knowing what subject to cover.

The list includes all the primary tangible and intangible qualities everyone loved in that top three group of all-time favorite teachers. The list is subject to modification, of course, but keep in mind--no modifying allowed if it is done to make the teaching job easier! This list attempts to measure behavior, not attitudes.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Organization of Syllabus
 Determining Suitable Workload
 Grading According to Pre-Set Expectations
 Learning Students' Names

AFFECTIVE QUALITIES

Use of Humor
 Creativity (measured by utilization of new mediums, materials, etc.)
 Accessibility to Students at Scheduled Times (outside of class)
 Ability to Stimulate Consistent Attendance

Ability to Evoke Questions

Ability to Stimulate Students' Interest in Learning

Spontaneity (measured by willingness to try new approaches to material, without excessive planning)

Willingness to be Proven Wrong

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Touch Control

Proximity Control (walking, running, even hopping near students!)

Eye Contact

Reinforce Students' Questioning

Reinforce Volunteering Answers (even when answers are erroneous)

Group Re-Organization (re-arranging seating, etc. to spice things up!)

Direct Appeal for Support in Clarifying a Point

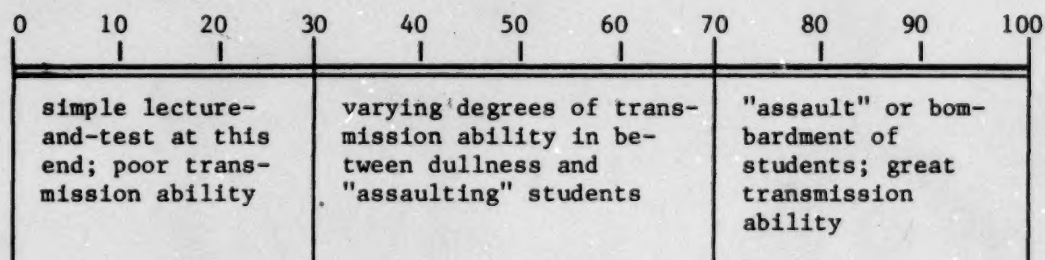
Challenging Students to Prove Teacher Wrong

Use of Affection or Mock Anger to Stimulate Students' Participation

COGNITIVE QUALITIES

Pursuit of Excellence in Subject Mastery

You may ask, now what? Now this. Imagine a line drawn horizontally across a blackboard, or a piece of paper on your desk. It goes from 1 to 100, and is broken into ten separate sections, from 10 to 90, such as the line drawn below.



You are aware, and I am aware, that 22 does not go into 100 an even 5 times. The result would be measured accurately.

Whether you can see it or not right now, there is a place for every teacher right there on that line. Basically, the 1 (one) end indicates that instructor who gives his students the lecture-test-get out approach; the 100 end is reserved for those marvelous teachers who really get their students to think and feel and even taste the subject. Then there are all the other points in between, for the rest of the teaching population.

How to wed the list of qualities with the line? Try this. Think of a teacher. Any teacher. Now go down that list, and give that teacher anywhere from 0 to 5 points for each quality or technique. For example, take the skill of learning students' names. A teacher could make an effort to learn the students' names always (5), frequently (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2), tries-but-fails (1), never (0). Therefore, if the teacher evaluated by a given class received a score of 100 points, that would mean that he or she was always using as many of those techniques or qualities as possible to make the learning memorable. On the other hand, a resounding zero would make the teacher just that--a zero!

Given this dandy new tool, whose hands should it fall into? Faculty? Student? Administration? All three? Let's go with all three right now, and see how well that notion matches current literature. There

is a great deal of controversy whether student evaluation of teachers is suitable, particularly since students can be perceived as being ill-prepared to assess a teacher's knowledge of subject matter.

Opponents of student evaluations have charged that students are incompetent judges of teaching effectiveness, that they place undue emphasis on stylistic dimensions of teaching, such as flashy lecture style and rapport with students, and that they tend to overlook content-oriented dimensions like the amount and quality of information imparted in the course.⁷

This set of charges can be effectively quashed by this finding in Marques et al.: "Excellent agreement was obtained between faculty and students when identifying 'best' and 'worst' teachers."⁸ However, there is another concern that seems to haunt researchers in the area of teacher evaluation, and that is the issue whether or not it is possible to measure teacher effectiveness by any viable and sufficiently objective scale.

Some choose to measure according to whether or not the students achieve reasonable scores on tests. There is the side issue of how rigorous the tests were, and how rigorous the marking was. But the central issue of concern among teachers is that students' failures will be attributed in a wholesale sort of way to teacher incompetence. This fear is best articulated in Robert Soar's "Using Student Performance

⁷ Marques et al., p. 844.

⁸ Marques et al., p. 841.

Outcomes for Teacher Evaluation: Out of the Question."⁹ In case the title leaves any room for doubt, Soar decries the use of student achievement as a measure of teacher effectiveness because student achievement is the end result of a multiplicity of external factors. These include home and hearth, physical well-being and the like.

This is a point well taken, even if Soar overstates the problem. Overall and Marsh make a solid case for using test scores to analyze and improve teacher effectiveness, with the midterm results used as a basis for students and teachers to openly discuss how to enhance the learning experience so that final grades would show improved performance on the part of the student and teacher alike. The evaluation at the midterm was conducted so as to include all manner of factors relevant to teacher performance, from student achievement on tests, to affective gains made by the students in the course of study. So, these researchers used test scores as one component in a list of factors that measured teacher effectiveness.¹⁰

This combined approach might be less threatening to teachers who would echo Soar's concerns that the failures of children would be attributed wholly to teacher ineffectiveness. Administrators who used the test

⁹Robert Soar, "Using Student Performance Outcomes for Teacher Evaluation: Out of the Question," NJEA, 53 (November 1979), p. 15.

¹⁰J. U. Overall and Herbert W. Marsh, "Midterm Feedback From Students: Its Relationship to Instructional Improvement and Student's Cognitive and Affective Outcomes," Journal of Educational Psychology, 71 (1979), p. 856.

scores as a component of their overall evaluation of teacher performance might cause fewer instructors to shiver and shake than if they use test scores alone. And use of test scores alone would, Heaven forbid, reinforce the existence of those test-conscious lecturers who made us all hate even out most favorite subjects from elementary school on through graduate courses (if you had any favorite subjects left by then!).

However, the mere whisper of the words evaluation of teachers with students' performance on tests may constitute such a bugaboo that the trouble may outweigh the benefit. However, if a teacher scores well on the rating system suggested in this text, there is good reason to suggest that his or her students would score well on their tests. They would be grabbing at the information with so much energy they couldn't help but learn it!

As Overall and Marsh point out,

the evaluation of instructional effectiveness has become increasingly prevalent at institutions of higher education. Students seek access to such evaluations for guidance in selecting courses and instructors; faculty, concerned with effective teaching, are interested in how their instruction is perceived by students; and administrators, faced with steady state and shrinking resources, seek effective and efficient means for making personnel decisions.¹¹

¹¹Overall and Marsh, p. 856.

That is a nice way of saying that teacher evaluations can be very potent stuff, and that instructors would do themselves a disservice if they choose to ignore the potential impact that student evaluations can have. If the motivation is no loftier than the simple drive to keep a job, teachers who seek to improve their teaching effectiveness may make their jobs considerably more lively. The possibility even exists that they might experience some zany joy in relaxing with their students and engendering a whole new learning atmosphere in their classes.

The list of qualities and skills presented in this paper are defensible interpretations of the wide range of affective, management, and cognitive qualities discussed in the literature pertaining to rating teachers according to their classroom attributes and general scholarly qualities.

The scale of one to one hundred is equally defensible, in that such scales, although they may vary as to specific breakdowns, are found throughout the literature regarding rating teachers according to how well they perform in the class and in their fields of expertise.

Given that the list and the scale are potentially viable tools in ascertaining how well a teacher goes about the business of teaching, how about giving it a second look? Who knows? Use enough of these skills often enough, and you may be in someone's top three teachers someday. In the meantime, with that 100 goal in sight, any teacher could either

get discouraged, or take the bull by the tail, look it square in the eye, and start working on becoming a more effective and stimulating professional! As a teacher, you've probably told more than one student that success was only a matter of effort. Maybe now is the time to listen to that lesson, and become a student of teaching once again.

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